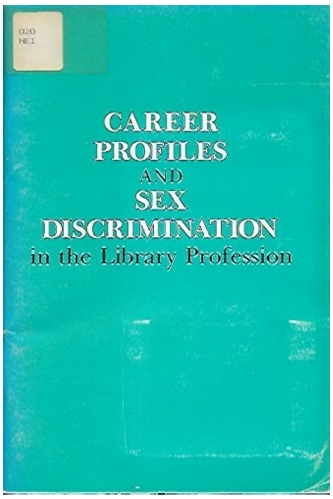
Career Profiles

McCook Kathleen de la Peña (Kathleen M. Heim) and Leigh S Estabrook. 1983. *Career Profiles and Sex Discrimination in the Library Profession*. Chicago: American Library Association.



Review:

The Status of Women Librarians by Katharine Phenix.

We know from 1980 census data that there are 136,000 librarians in the United States and that 84.6 percent of them are women.' Membership in the American Library Association (ALA) is over 40,000 and 78.3 percent is female.2 So indeed we have empirical data backing up the widely held notion that librarianship in this century is a woman's profession. But only 100 years ago this was not true: women came into the profession because we were cheap and available. Women's presence in librarianship shot up from 20 percent in 1870 to 75 percent in 1900.3 Justin Windsor said in 1877, "In American libraries, we set a high value on women's work. They soften our atmosphere, they lighten our labor, they are equal to our work, and for the money they cost-they are infinitely bet ter than equivalent salaries will produce in the other sex."4

Thus when we look at the status of women in libraries, we find that women predominate but men dominate because of a century of discrimination-a statistical variable that I do not know how to measure. What is the status of women in libraries? Since 1981 I have been the bibliographer for the ALA Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship, which is charged with the "collection, analysis, dissemination and coordination of information on the status of women in librarian ship. "' In 110 years of bibliographical effort, over 2,000 citations to literature on

women in libraries have been com piled. Of those, 120 emerge as major research materials that attempt to describe the status of women in libraries and highlight the variables that have put us where we are today. Librarians have been studied in every grouping imaginable.

Library associations do membership surveys that tell us about law librarians, archivists, educational media technologists, medical librarians, and information scientists. There have been geographical surveys that describe librarians in the Midwest, the Southeast, or in a particular state. We know about librarians who perform a particular service, such as reference, children's services, or library science educators. Data on new graduates from library school are compiled every year. Some researchers look at librarians in particular institutions: public, school, academic, or special libraries. We know a great deal about those at the top-public library directors, academic library directors, the deans and the directors of library schools.

The most informative survey on librarians in the United States done to date was funded by a grant awarded to the **Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL)** in 1979. The research was done by Kathleen M. Heim and Leigh S. Estabrook, who published their findings in ***Career Profiles and Sex Discrimination in the Library Profession.*** The COSWL profile project analyzed questionnaires returned by a random sample of individual members of the American Library Association. When we compare its data with other information about librarians, we find that there is no place, no institution, no level of service, no type of librarian, and no association in which women are found at the top in equal or greater numbers than men, or where women earn salaries greater than or equal to men's.

The Heim and Estabrook COSWL profile project reports that the average salary for women in academic libraries is $14,850; for men $20,520. In public libraries, women earned $14,236 to men's $19,319; in school libraries, women earned $14,725, men $18,692.7 In a 1982 survey of academic library directors in Connecticut, women earned an average salary of $17,482 to men's $23,992.8 A study in Oregon showed that male library faculty at every level were more highly paid than She is not the first to point this out. Paul Metz reported on administrative succession in academic libraries in 1978,41 and Albert F. Maag's research on 122 librarians pointed to the same career patterns.42 Terence Mech's survey of small college directors reveals similar patterns: in his study of library directors in the Midwest who were chosen internally, 19 percent of the men and 40 percent of the women were chosen because they stayed at a single institution and worked up the administrative ladder.

Finally, a study by Dorothy J. Anderson44 compared an elite group of librarians-UCLA Senior Fellows, who are selected on the basis of their current and potential leadership capabilities-to a matched group of librarians who were members of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). There were twelve male and thirteen female senior fellows. Anderson reports "strikingly similar" career patterns between the women and the men. The women, however, reported more publications, held more than twice as many division offices and association

presidencies, and exceeded their male counterparts in management positions by 11 percent. The female senior fellows held more second master's degrees and twice as many doctorates as the male senior fellows. (She notes that this finding runs counter to Swisher and Du Mont, who found a disproportionately low percentage of women academic librarians holding or pursuing degrees.) Anderson suggests that women need greater academic credibility than men to get ahead. Librarianship is not the only profession in which sex stratification and discrimination occur at the entry level, in the field, and even on the unemployment lines. The strategies we use to stop, lessen, or reverse the tide that forces women into the lower ranks of the profession, however, must combine research and activism. We need, at the research level, to identify the factors that ghettoize us and work to change them. If we find that we must have more credentials, then let us fight for more Ph.D.s. If it is mentoring that makes the difference, then we must iden tify and reward our potential mentors. If particular career patterns lead to the top, then we must draw these maps. And, ultimately, we must do more than simply draw the maps of the existing routes to library directorships and deanships-we must work to change them. In all cases sex discrimination must be fought.

Katharine Phenix is the circulation librarian at the Westminster Public Library in Colorado. She holds two master's degrees: one in library and information science and a second, C.A.S. degree, in library automation and women's studies, both from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This article is based on a presentation given at the National Women's Studies Association conference in Seattle in 1985, at the NWSA Librarian's Task Force. "As always, " Phenix writes, "I would like to thank my teacher, friend, and mentor, Kathleen M. Heim, for absolutely everything." FRONTIERS Vol. IX, No. 2 @1987 FRONTIERS Editorial Collective

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